

[Interview with Howard Roosa]

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Interview on Eugera Manlow Rhodes good

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INTERVIEW WITH HOWARD ROOSA (1)

“Yes”, Mr. Roosa said to me, “I am interested in the work of Eugene Aanlove Rhodes. I have a copy of each of his books, but only one first edition. It's practically impossible to get first editions of Rhodes' work. I know the western representative of Houghton [Gifflin?] is much interested in Rhodes and he says the first editions seem to have disappeared.”

“And it seems just as hard to find any real information about the man. As far as I know there are no tales—no legend that has grown up about him, as is the case with so many artists and writers. Perhaps that is because of the long period—twenty years I believe—during which Rhodes was absent from this country. Before he left he was just a cowboy. When he came back he was a writer. And during that long hiatus people had died and things had been forgotten. It may be that there were many things he would have wished to be forgotten. I have the impression that there was something mysterious about his leavetaking, although I can't give you any authority for that impression. Anyhow, he was a man who never seemed to care to talk much about himself.”

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"I saw Rhodes only once. The way I met him was almost as curious as the meeting itself. I was staying at La Jolla which is not far from Pacific Beach, California,—Rhodes home, you know, during his later years. Seems to me I heard he had to go to the coast for bronchitis. Well, anyway, I used to walk to the post office—a distance of two or three miles. One day on the way back a man picked me up in his car." C18-N. Mex.

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"He was a nice fellow—a mail carrier—and we got to talkin. I told him I was from New Mexico. And he told me that Eugene Aanlove Rhodes was on his mail route and offered to show me where he lived. I had been interested in Rhodes and in collecting his work, so several days later I went to see him. I remember there was no one home at first, and I had to wait. Before long he came in with his wife. His wife was a charming woman—a very —ah—I can't think of the words I want this morning,— live, that's it, she was a very alive sort of person. She entered into the conversation, not to monopolize it you understand, but one was always aware of her presence. I tried to get Rhodes to talk about his work, and himself, but I didn't have much success that way. He talked to me about some woman in Cocorro whose writings about this country interested him. Can't remember her name now. Anyway, I wasn't much interested. We also talked about a number of books in which he was interested. I wish now I had had the foresight to make a list because it would have thrown light upon his reading interests. But I didn't and I can't remember one of them—all current works at the time and none of the things that particularly interested me. At that time a man in Los Angeles was planning to get out a ten-volume edition of Rhodes work for fifty dollars. We talked about that and Rhodes agreed with me that The Little Depippus should have the ending used in the Saturday Evening Post version rather than the one he gave it in book form. He gave me the manuscript of 'In Defense of Pat Garrett'(published in unset, [?]: 26-7, September 1927. I don't have a very clear recollection of what Rhodes looked like—that was about ten years ago—except that he was a little man, and he called me 'ister'—just 'ister'".

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"I don't believe his books ever achieved the popularity that they deserved. They were too sophisticated for the reader of wild western tales, and the more sophisticated reader has a prejudice against westerns and cowboy tales. But the cowboys liked his stories. You can't find a real old-time cowboy who doesn't swear by Rhodes. They laugh at the average western tale, but Rhodes is the cowboy's author. I remember Charles Giringo saying that Rhodes stories were the real thing."

"From something I've read of him—I can't recall just where—I have the impression that Rhodes hated the task of composing. He was always very reluctant to get down to the actual writing. I had a housekeeper who claimed to have known him very well. She said he wrote lots of poetry. You know he always signed his poetry 'Gene Rhodes'. I believe that his first interest in writing was in poetry, and that it was some time before he realized that fiction was more his medium. His poems seem to me jut versifying really, but there is poetry in his novels. Now you take that introduction to The Trusty Knaves —about the cats, you remember—."

"I remember my housekeeper saying too that he was always reading. But that wouldn't have been unusual for a cowboy in the old days. They were all much more literate than people know. I believe it was Rhodes himself who told how they would got real literature from the soap companies—or maybe it was the coffee companies. Anyhow, some of these companies put out coupons which could be redeemed for paper-covered copies of the classics—Dickens, Shakespeare, and so on. It was these paper-covered classics that furnished most of the cowboys' reading material in the old days."

"I'm sorry that I can't give you more information about Rhodes, but I think that if you would go to see that old housekeeper of mine, Mrs. Ostic, and get her to talk to you, you might got some very interesting material". 4 [?] 1. Personal interview with Howard Roosa, known as a collector of New Mexicana, 1419 West Roma Avenue, Albuquerque, New Mexico.